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American Graduate Day 2013

Panelists Biographies

Dr. John B. King, Jr.

*Commissioner of Education and
President of the University of the State of New York*

As New York State Education Commissioner, Dr. John B. King, Jr. oversees more than 7,000 public and Independent elementary and secondary schools (serving 3.1 million students), and hundreds of other educational institutions across New York State including higher education, libraries, and museums. Dr. King is a strong voice for education reform, and he was a driving force in New York's successful Race to the Top application. A former high school teacher and middle school principal, Dr. King has earned a national reputation for his vision and commitment to education reform. Dr. King earned a B.A. from Harvard University, an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University, a J.D. from Yale Law School, and an Ed.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Kathrine Mott

Executive Director of Citizen Schools New York

Kathrine Mott is the new Executive Director of Citizen Schools New York. Kathrine joins us with a personal passion for closing the opportunity and achievement gaps and a wealth of sales, fundraising, talent management and program leadership experience. Most recently, Kathrine was the Executive Director at REACH, which provided academic support and incentive payments in order to improve the college readiness of highly-motivated, low-income students. In this role, Kathrine developed the organization's program strategy and spearheaded its first randomized control trial evaluation. Previous to REACH, she served in leadership roles at Management Leadership for Tomorrow, Kaplan Test Prep & Admissions and Northwestern University, where she also earned her undergraduate degree and later her MBA from the Kellogg School of Management.

Joe Patuleia

Executive Director Madison Square Boys & Girls Club

Some are born to serve, others to lead. Joseph Patuleia, Executive Director of the Madison Square Boys & Girls Club, was clearly destined for both roles. Born to a Portuguese immigrant and his first generation Italian-American wife, Joe's childhood was one of overcoming adversity. His mother died while giving birth, along with her baby, before Joe's fifth birthday. His father was devastated and his two siblings were farmed out to various friends and relatives while Joe was sent to live with his paternal grandparents. Although Joe's brother and sister eventually returned to their father's home, he remained with his grandparents, who were both disabled and needed his help.

Despite the fact that he grew up in the poor section of Peabody, MA, Joe did not lack for guidance or support. In sixth grade, a student teacher, recognizing the youngster's intelligence and drive, inspired Joe, as did his seventh grade teacher, the following year. A tenth grade French teacher took over in high school as a mentor and friend. Others looking out for Joe were the minister and parishioners of the local Congregational Church and the youth group advisors, who embraced the youngster like substitute parents. "I didn't see much of my father," Joe recalls. "But there were lots of people watching out for me, urging me to try hard and excel in school and in life."

Joe graduated from Peabody High School fifth out of a class of over 400 and went on to attend Fitchburg State with a major in mathematics and education. "I chose education because I wanted to be like the teachers who had inspired me. I wanted to help kids the way people had helped me." As a community service project for his college service fraternity, Joe manned a local boys club, tutoring youngsters and coaching them in sports on weekends.

Graduating cum laude, Joe accepted a teaching position at Bedford High School in Bedford, MA, where he excelled at teaching and coaching, being named "Coach of the Year" in two sports. He remained there seventeen years, making contributions so exceptional that he was awarded a year's sabbatical, on full salary, to attend Harvard University and pursue a Master's Degree in Education.

Master's Degree in hand, Joe assumed a series of challenging leadership positions, from Assistant Principal to Principal at several junior and senior high schools, culminating with his being named Principal of his own alma mater, Peabody Veterans Memorial High School. Joe spent eight years as Principal of Peabody High, including a four month, double-duty stint as Interim Superintendent. During his tenure, the school improved in almost every statistical category, from AP and SAT scores, to increased attendance and decreased drop-out rates. Beyond the numbers, Joe created an environment conducive to success. For teachers, he developed professional development and recognition programs and for students, he raised standards while creating recognition programs and various academic competitions. Joe also promoted the visual arts, created a TV studio program, and strongly supported the Performing Arts Department while instituting diversity training and cultural and international exchanges. He wanted to

make school a place for everyone.

In 2004, Joe was nominated for Massachusetts Principal of the Year and was approached by the Board of Directors of the Madison Square Boys & Girls Club to become Executive Director of the organization. Although he had never considered the possibility of moving on, Joe was struck by Madison's mission and the way the organization was truly committed to providing youngsters hope and opportunity, much the same as had been provided for him growing up. His heart told him that this was a very special opportunity and he enthusiastically accepted the position.

As Madison's Executive Director, Joe Patuleia has been a leader and advocate for underserved kids in NYC, particularly in the toughest areas of the city. Whether it is at a Rotary Club meeting or in front of the New York City Council Joe's passion for Madison's kids is clear and inspiring. Under Joe's leadership, Madison has developed a model afterschool education program that encompasses all kids from the ages of 6 to 18. Likewise, an overall holistic philosophy has been created so that kids that come to the club are able to develop their leadership skills, healthy lifestyles, and a direction for their life, that includes an emphasis on getting a high school diploma and furthering their education from there.

Joe's enthusiasm for leading and serving Madison's kids is exemplary and has enriched the lives of thousands of youngsters, encouraging them as he himself was encouraged so many years earlier.

Sanjiv Rao

Program Officer Educational Opportunity & Scholarship, Ford Foundation

Sanjiv Rao focuses on educational equity issues in the United States, making grants to support improvements to the public education system's school day to benefit low-income communities in particular. He supports innovative efforts around the development, advocacy and scalability of a redesigned school day and year to close opportunity gaps so that underserved youth have access to the high-quality educational and other learning experiences they need to succeed.

Prior to joining the foundation in 2012, Sanjiv served as executive director of the New York State Afterschool Network, where he led policy efforts to link and integrate youth development and expanded learning more effectively with the public education system. Sanjiv began his career as an elementary school teacher in California, Texas and Mexico. He has worked in school system improvement as a senior associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, and as a member of the research team studying the Ford-funded Leadership for a Changing World program while a doctoral student at New York University.

Sanjiv has a Ph.D. in public administration from New York University, an M.A. in education from the University of California, Berkeley, and a B.A. in History from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Kamar Samuels

Principal, Bronx Writing Academy

Kamar Samuels is the principal of the Bronx Writing Academy (BWA) where has led a faculty toward driving dramatic student achievement gains despite a difficult economic climate. He became the principal of the BWA after serving a year as a principal intern through the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) residency program. Prior to joining NLNS, Kamar served a Business Manager and Data Specialist at the Gun Hill Road School. He is a former NYC Teaching Fellow who taught in an elementary school setting for five years. He joined the NYC Teaching Fellows program after spending three years as a Finance Manager with the National Basketball Association. Kamar uses his years of corporate and public service experience to provide bold and strategic leadership in confronting some of the most pressing issues in urban education. He holds a M.S. Ed. in Childhood Education from Lehman College, CUNY and a BBA in Accounting from Baruch College, CUNY.

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